

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the thoroughness with which the Examiner has examined the above-identified application. The present amendment is prepared in accordance with the requirements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.121. A marked-up copy of the claims is provided above. In the marked-up version of the claims, inserted material is underlined and deleted material has a line there through. Reconsideration is requested in view of the amendments above and the remarks below.

Restriction Requirement

In a previous response to a restriction requirement, applicants elected Group II, claims 10-28, with traverse. Applicants have canceled claims 1-9 and 29-32 herein, removing them from further prosecution at this time.

35 U.S.C. § 101 Issues

The Examiner has rejected claims 10-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 because the steps of notifying, prompting and generating are not recited as computer implemented. The present invention discloses a system and method for shipping material that is implemented through application software. Specification, p.7, ll.23-25. Consequently, the method steps claimed are indeed computer implemented. The system prompts the requester to input data, and automatically forwards this data to the appropriate controlling functions. Importantly, "[e]ach authorization party is *automatically* notified of approvals or rejections." Specification, p.8, ll.17-18 (emphasis added). Some data may be manually input to the system; however, all prompts, notifications, distributions, and routings (generating steps) are done automatically, i.e., by the computer system itself.

[T]he request is routed *automatically* through an approval/rejection process which, along with the aforementioned control authorizations (export, finance, hazardous and sensitive materials, and the like), traffic, security, and had carry authorizations are also solicited. Each authorization party is *automatically* notified of approvals or rejections.

Specification, p.8, ll.13-18 (emphasis added).

Applicants have amended claims 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 20 and 27 to clarify that the computer operating system software implements particular method steps automatically or electronically. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended, overcome the 35 U.S.C. § 101 issues.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Issues

The Examiner has rejected claims 10-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicants regard as the invention. Specifically, the Examiner states that it is unclear whether the steps of notifying, prompting, and generating are computer-implemented steps or are carried out by human intervention. Applicants submit that the amendments discussed above to overcome the 35 U.S.C. § 101 rejections also overcome the 35 U.S.C. § 112 rejections. Applicants have delineated which steps are carried out electronically, i.e., by computer-implemented steps, rather than by human intervention. Applicants submit that these amendments place the claims in a condition for allowance.

35 U.S.C. § 103 Issues

The Examiner has rejected claims 10-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saito, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,669,832) in view of Altendahl, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,571,213). Applicants respectfully disagree.

First, Saito teaches having a person create an electronic document for a request, and then request a manager to approve of it in the form of electronic data without any verification of the requester. Saito, col. 4, ll.9-13. The present invention requires the system software to

electronically verify the requester. "The system then verifies the request for content against a database to ensure a proper requester. This database is sometimes referred to as the 'denied parties' database." Specification, p.9, ll.14-16. The Examiner states that this electronic verification step is expedient in the art. However, neither Saito nor Altendahl teach or disclose electronically verifying the content requested to ensure that only a proper requester makes the inquiry. Applicants have amended claim 10 to more specifically claim that the requester is electronically verified against the electronic database. Furthermore, the present invention also verifies the approving manager or the manager's designee against a manager delegation database to ensure proper authorization. Specification, p.9, ll.22-23. Saito is completely silent on automatic management approvals. Applicant has amended claim 10 to include this verification step as well.

Unlike other prior art systems, the present invention keeps management in the loop throughout this automated requesting process. In the event the approval comes from a manager's designee, the requester's manager is nevertheless copied on the electronic mail messages so that he or she may remain informed of the requester's activities, and the approvals given or denied by the manager's designee.

If the approving manager is a delegate for the requester's manager, the requester's manager is also copied on the electronic mail message. Specification, p.9, ll.26-28.

Applicants have amended claim 10 to include the notification of the requester's manager when a designated manager is making the necessary approvals.

In the Saito invention, the requester waits for a manager's approval and then personally sends the request from the terminal to a general affairs service center. Saito, col. 4, ll.9-17. In the present invention, the system automatically forwards the request on to the next functional approval station and next approving manager. The requester is advised or notified

of this activity. The present invention notifies electronically "said next required approving manager or next required approving manager designee after said initial approval" and the requester "continuously via electronic mail of the status of said request." Cl. 10. The prior art does not teach, disclose, or suggest this notification process.

Moreover, the present invention automatically provides for specific clearance from authorizing departments when special shipments are requested. For example, in the event precious metals are requested for shipment, a sensitive material coordinator is automatically notified and approval is automatically requested. Specification, p.10, ll.27-29. Similarly, if the shipping request indicates that the shipment contains hazardous material, the hazardous material coordinator is automatically contacted electronically, and a document link is provided so that the hazardous material coordinator can review the shipment request and provide approval or rejection. Specification, p.10, l.29 – p.11, l.5. Applicants have amended claim 10 to include the determination electronically by the system of which manager or manager's designee should be notified for the particular shipping request, e.g., a precious materials manager, a hazmat manager, or other specialized functional manager. The prior art is silent regarding this determination.

Further, the present invention teaches controlled access by roles. Specifically, if the shipping request indicates that the shipment contains confidential or sensitive materials by exhibiting predetermined security classifications, a sensitive materials coordinator or approved designee is contacted, and prompted to assign a status to the request. Specification, p.11, ll.22-28.

As stated by the Examiner, Saito is silent regarding any approvals of shipping instructions. Furthermore, Saito and Altendahl do not suggest, teach, or disclose an automated approval cycle where the system automatically determines the applicable

approving managers (or their designees), prompts the managers for approval, statuses the requester and the requester's manager during the approval cycle, and links all necessary documentation for each approving manager.

It is respectfully submitted that with the amendments described above the application has now been brought into a condition where allowance of the entire case is proper. Reconsideration and issuance of a Notice of Allowance are respectfully solicited. Should the Examiner not find the claims to be allowable, Applicants' attorney respectfully requests that the Examiner call the undersigned to clarify any issue and/or to place the case in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service on the date indicated below as first class mail in an envelope addressed to the Assistant Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231.

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